SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
23
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TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

THE BEAST

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SUMMARY

Covenant spends a rare night of sleep tormented by nightmares. Upon awaking, he sees a fetus-like sack hanging from the tree above him. It's a new Hellspawn waiting to be born. Its name is Yagher, and he tells Covenant his story. What becomes clear is that there can be no more than one Hellspawn on Earth at any one time. Covenant realizes that Yagher cannot be allowed to live. He smashes the fetal Hellspawn, thereby declaring an all-out war on Hell itself.

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Whittome City.

King Leo Greager's city.

It is a place that has seen many soldiers cross to fight for the lands, wealth and freedom. Through these lands battalions could reach Scotland, Wales and cross to Ireland if needed, or reach the shores where the craggy rocks gave them an advantage against the invading Norseman.

Many illustrious heroes stood upon these lands; William Wallace fought a battle that saw thousands of Britons killed, and before him, Queen Buddicca stood with her rebellion and faced down the Romans before turning on London and burning it to the ground to spite her oppressors.

These grounds, this patch of earth, stands soaked with the blood of its heroes, but today they are bone-dry. The city is strong with enough food to feed the surrounding villages and a large enough army to keep even the dreaded Vikings at bay.

These are the times that try the patience of a warrior.
Even if that warrior is a young woman who must conceal her fighter's heart.
Her name is Raven Greager, and she hungers.
Ohhh...
COME NOW BROTHER. SURELY YOU CAN TAKE A BETTER BLOW THAN THAT LITTLE PINCH I DELIVERED.
STAND DOWN LIAM. YOU'VE HAD YOUR SHOT AT LITTLE THOMAS. NOW LET'S SEE HOW YOU FARE AGAINST ME.
LET'S SEE WHAT YOU HAVE FOR ME.
SOON IT'LL BE A MOUTH OF BLOODY TEETH YOU HAVE, CHARLES.
YOU THREE ARE SOUNDING GOOD AND BRAVE AGAINST EACH OTHER. BUT WHICH ONE OF YOU THINKS THEY CAN BEST ME WITH SWORD AND SHIELD?

Huh. WHAT'S THIS?
YOU GOT TO BE JOKING, LITTLE SISTER?
RAVEN?!
GO ON BACK TO SEWING YOUR WEDDING GOWN WHILE YOUR FIANCEE STILL HAS BOTH FEET ON THE GROUND.
GO ON, GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE FATHER SEES YOU.
ARE YOU SCARED OF ME? ALL THREE OF YOU, FIGHT ME AND FATHER WILL SEE THAT I HAVE THE SKILLS FOR MORE THAN BREEDING LIKE A CHICKEN OR PIG!
COME NOW, RAVEN. YOU'LL RIP YER DRESS.
IF IT'S THE DRESS THAT BOTHER'S YOU BROTHERS, THEN I WILL TAKE IT OFF.
But the call runs deep in her heart and is not easy for her to ignore...

AND NOW...
...ONE OF YOU PIG-LICKERS WILL FIGHT ME!
YOU KNOW HOW FATHER FEELS, SISTER. WHETHER WE FIGHT OR NOT...
ENOUGH TALK!
YAH!
OOH!
AND THAT WAS JUST A SAMPLE OF THE FURY I BRING TO THE BATTLE-FIELD.
THAT IS ABOUT ALL OF THIS NONSENSE I WILL STAND FOR. READY YOUR SWORD LITTLE GIRL. I'M GOING TO SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE.

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THAT'S MORE LIKE IT, BROTHER CHARLES. BUT EVEN I CAN SEE YOU ARE STILL HOLDING BACK.
AYE. IF I DID NOT, YOU WOULD BE DEAD, AND I WOULD BE MY SISTERS KILLER.
OH REALLY?
IF YOUR TECHNIQUE WERE AS WELL MUSCLED AS YOUR MOUTH I WOULD BELIEVE YOUR TAUNTS.
SISTER OR NO, I WILL NOT HAVE MY HONOR MADE LIGHT OF.
NOW, BROTHER, THIS IS ALL IN GOOD SPIRIT.
NOT ANY MORE!
I WON'T BE MADE LIGHT OF! DO YOU HEAR ME?! I WON'T! NOT BY A LITTLE WENCH LIKE YOU!
CHARLES!
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH YOU? SHE'S JUST A GIRL!
SHE'S YOUR SISTER YOU STUPID BEAST!

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I'M SURE HE IS SORRY RAVEN. PLEASE DON'T TELL FATHER OF THIS.
GET OFF!
BEFORE THE EYES OF GOD, I AM PLEADING WITH YOU RAVEN. I AM SORRY. I LOST CONTROL.
IF FATHER HEARS OF THIS, CHARLES WILL BE BANISHED... OR WORSE.
I KNOW...
...I WILL SAY I WAS THROWN FROM A HORSE. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM FATHER.
IDIOT.

It started in the early morning.
A strange pain that was so far removed from Covenant's mind that he did not recognize the sensation.
It was a digging in his belly. A rolling and bubbling in his gut.
What new madness is this, he thought?
But then his memory slowly returned. Images and feelings he had not felt since before his death.
It was hunger... human hunger.
As Hellspawn he had eaten for taste and fulfillment, but his body never required nourishment.
GAH

His Hell-born body, lacking the energy of the Necroplasm, craved energy that only food could supply.

Now wandering into the darkest hollows of the Black Wood, Covenant came to a second revelation.

He was lost.

Whatever area of the wood this was, he had never tread them.

This was the wood of the legendary Beast of the Black Wood. The beast that he himself had been mistaken for.

The beast that is rumored to have slaughtered numerous innocents; men woman and children alike.

If there were such a beast, Covenant did not fear it.

All he desired was some more substantial food to quiet his angry belly.

But more times than not, what one wants is not what they get.

Now, with his belly silenced, other sounds intruded.

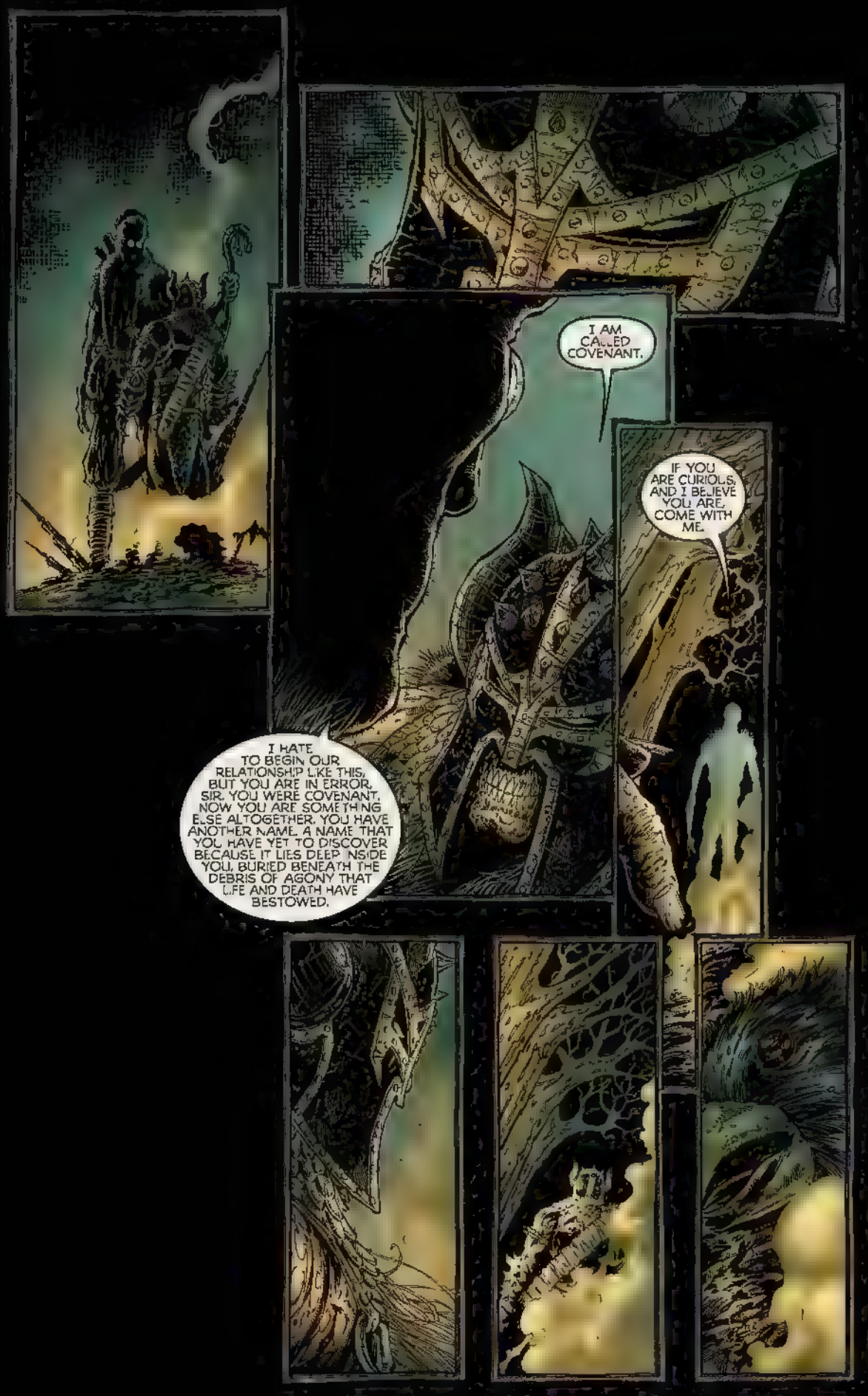
It started with a low noise. A rumble like his belly, but lower, deeper... like a warning.

Then the light that had seeped in through the treetops all but disappeared.
Suddenly the Hellspawn sensed that he was not alone.
Something or someone circled him as he stood.
Its movement odd, jerky, but quick like an insect.
Then there came footsteps, light at first, then heavy. Whatever it was, was huge, possibly bigger than Covenant himself.
SHOW YOURSELF BEAST!
Then... silence.
In the distance a
fizz.

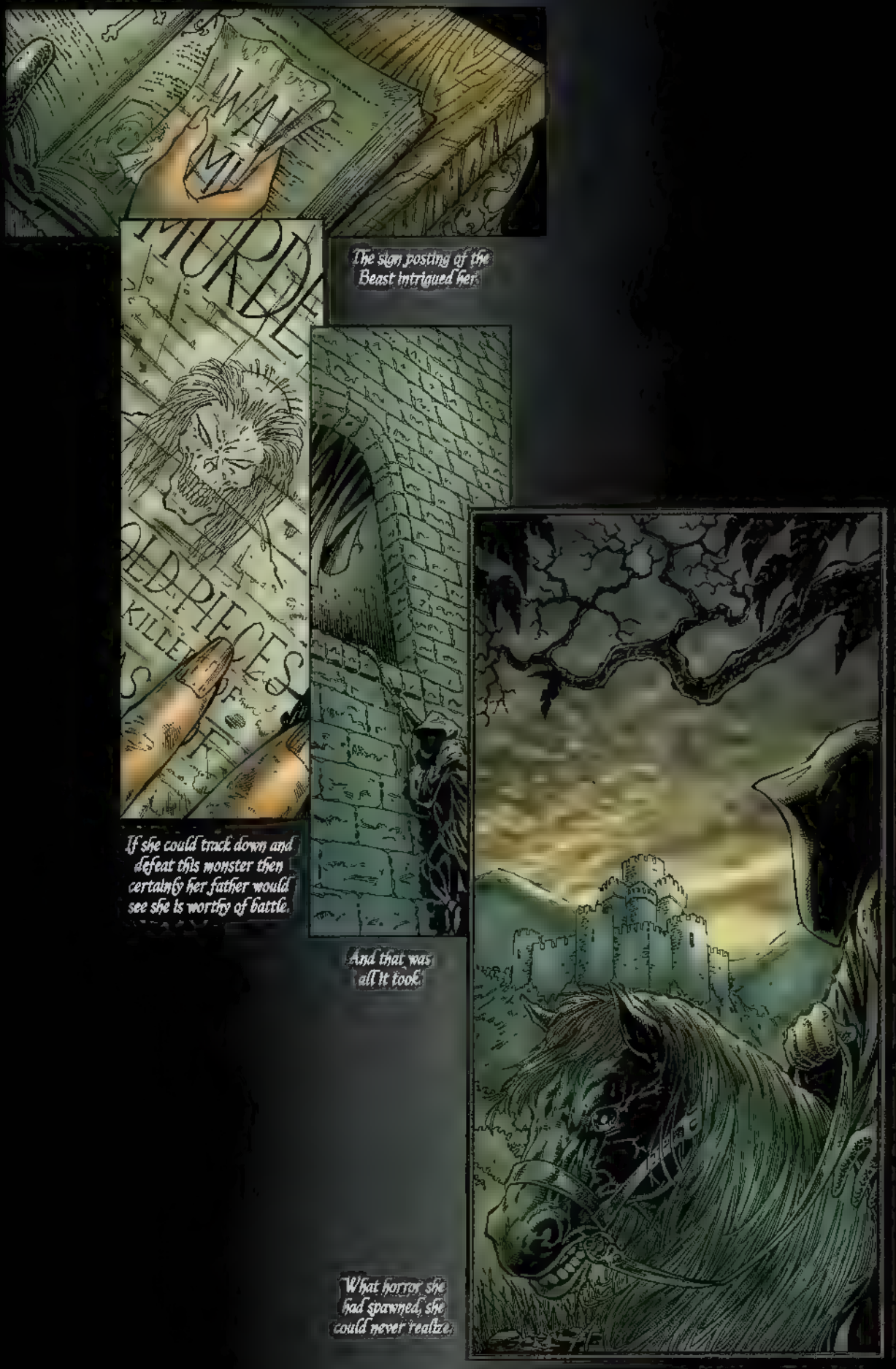
BOOM

WHAT IS THIS MADNESS?!
WHAT IS THIS SORCERY?!
THIS MADNESS THAT YOU FEAR IS...
WHO?
...WHAT I CALL... SCIENCE.

PARDON THE EXPLOSION. I MISTOOK YOU FOR AN INTRUDER.
IT WOULD SEEM YOU AND I HAVE TAKEN PARTIAL CREDIT FOR THE VERY SAME NAME. SOME CALL ME THE BEAST OF THE WOOD, AS THEY HAVE YOU, BUT THAT IS A RUSE AND LIE THAT I CHOOSE TO PERPETUATE FOR THE SAKE OF MY SAFETY AND SOLITUDE.
I AM DUMAS.
AND YOU MUST BE THE SPAWN OF HELL OF WHOM I HAVE HEARD SO MANY ILL-FATED TALES?
IT WOULD SEEM THAT FATE HAS TAKEN A TURN AND BROUGHT US TOGETHER FOR A REASON, EH?


I AM CALLED COVENANT.
IF YOU ARE CURIOUS, AND I BELIEVE YOU ARE, COME WITH ME.
I HATE TO BEGIN OUR RELATIONSHIP LIKE THIS, BUT YOU ARE IN ERROR, SIR. YOU WERE COVENANT, NOW YOU ARE SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER. YOU HAVE ANOTHER NAME. A NAME THAT YOU HAVE YET TO DISCOVER BECAUSE IT LIES DEEP INSIDE YOU, BURIED BENEATH THE DEBRIS OF AGONY THAT LIFE AND DEATH HAVE BESTOWED.

The beating was the final straw.
If she remains in Whittome, she would not fight as her brother fight. She would wed, and be forced to be the wife of a terrible man.
A man terrible in his plainness, in his horrible lack of adventure.
If she is to answer her call, this is the day to take it.
The call for action runs deep in her heart and is not easily ignored. And that is why, on the eve of her arranged marriage, Raven Greager decided to flee.


The sign posting of the Beast intrigued her.
If she could track down and defeat this monster then certainly her father would see she is worthy of battle.
And that was all it took.
What horror she had spawned, she could never realize.

Gareth began his day by removing the skin of his friend from the trees.
Following the removal of the flayed flesh, the Druid priest solemnly freed each limb that dangled from the branches.
He then, out of respect for the warrior, reassembled the appendages, placing them gently on top of the outstretched flesh. In turn, laid out on a bed of straw and stone.
DAMN YOU ALL! GET AWAY!
Makus had served him well. He had stood by the Druid when all others had abandoned him.
Now this.

"What a horrible ending to the brave life of a warrior.
And, whoever had done this, still walked the wood, waiting, watching and biding their time for a second attack.
By noon Gareth had the funeral pyre for the Deni warrior aflame. He decorated the platform with flowers and colorful weeds that grew beneath the fortress hut.
The Druid watched the body of his friend burn, and he pondered.
When the enemy would strike again? Perhaps tonight, or the next?
It did not matter. When they did decide to come and face him, he would fight. Maybe he would win, perhaps he would perish, but he would fight. He would do his best.

JUST LET IT BE DONE. SHOW YOURSELF COWARDS. YOU HAVE MURDERED AN INNOCENT MAN TO PUT FEAR IN MY SOUL. YET I DO NOT FEAR YOU. SHOW YOURSELF AND DO YOUR WORST. IF THE EVIL IS MEANT TO BE IN YOUR HANDS, THEN SO BE IT. BUT STOP THIS GAME OF HIDING AND DEATH!
GAH!
GAGH! F... FOOLS!
DO... NO...
...NOT RE... RELEASE.
...THE... EVIL...

SEARCH THE SHELTER. THE OBJECT WE SEEK IS THERE!
WHAT ABOUT THE DRUID?
LEAVE HIM FOR THE WORMS HE PRAYS TO. MAYBE THEY WILL SAVE HIM.
WELL? DO YOU SEE IT?
NOT YET, YOUR HOLINESS. BUT...WAIT! I SEE IT! IT'S AS GREEN AS A MORNING CLOVER!
SAVE YOUR OBSERVATIONS. BRING IT TO ME AT ONCE.
GREETINGS HERETIC. MY NAME IS KILLIAN OF THE ORDER OF BISHOP GASTON GUI. WE COME IN THE NAME OF THE HOLY FATHER AND HIS ENEMIES.
WE COME IN THE NAME OF GOD, HERETIC.
DO YOU SEE THIS, DRUID? THIS IS THE FUTURE NOW. THIS IS THE WAY. THIS IS THE PATH WALKED BY THE RIGHTEOUS. YOUR WAYS ARE DEAD. I SUGGEST YOU BEG FORGIVENESS OF THE HOLY FATHER BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.
DO YOU WISH TO CONFESS YOUR SINS?
REPENT! PRONOUNCE YOUR REGRETS AND BE DELIVERED TO THE LORD!

MY ONLY REGRET... IS THAT THE WORLD HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO A ORDER OF HATEFUL GODS AND VENGEFUL ANGELS NO BETTER THAN THE DEVILS AND DEMONS WHO OPPOSE THEM. I REGRET THAT I WAS UNABLE TO STOP A WAR... FOUGHT BY TWO EVILS DRENCHED IN HATRED AND BLOOD.
THAT... IS MY ONLY REGRET.
One side of the war now has what the other controls. This was never to happen.
HERE IT IS YOUR HOLINESS.
GOD BE PRAISED. BISHOP GUI WILL BE PLEASED.
What will come of this horrific mishap will shape the future of the world. Nothing, from this day forth, is certain, except one terrible truth.
Blood will be spilled.
WHAT ABOUT HIM SIR?
HE HAS CHOSEN HIS FATE. THE EARTH IS HIS GOD. LET THE DIRT SAVE HIM.
PATOO! PAGAN PIG-SHIT!
Blood spilled like oceans.
FOOLS... YOU KNOW NOT... WHAT YOU UN-LEASH...
All that will be left will be the dividing of souls as the futile bounty of a bloody and pointless war.

DARKNESS
M·K